



Embassy of the United States of America
100 Duke & Young Streets, Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana

Installment Seventy-Six

Ask the Consul – Beware “Visa Consultants”

This installment of *Ask the Consul* informs readers that the ONLY reputable source in Guyana for a visa to enter the United States or for information concerning a visa is the U.S. Embassy, official U.S. government websites, and official press releases such as this column. Any other source in Guyana claiming to represent the U.S. Embassy, U.S. Customs and Immigration, the U.S. Departments of State or Homeland Security, or any “consultant” claiming to be able to expedite or secure you a U.S. visa is attempting to defraud you of money or take advantage of you. There is one and only one way to legally travel to the United States: securing a valid immigrant or non-immigrant visa from the U.S. Embassy.

I read an advertisement in the newspaper recently about a “visa consultant” who guaranteed me a U.S. visitor’s visa for a fee. Is this offer too good to be true?

Yes. The offer is too good to be true. No one except commissioned U.S. consular officers has the authority to grant non-U.S. citizens immigrant or non-immigrant visas. U.S. consular officers are commissioned by the President of the United States with the authority to issue visas to qualified applicants and deny visas to unqualified applicants under U.S. immigration law. Only U.S. officers possessing a consular commission have the authority to grant a valid visa. Commissioned officers do not advertise their services in local news papers. U.S. consular officers in Guyana meet with legitimate visa applicants only during scheduled interviews conducted by appointment exclusively at the U.S. Embassy Georgetown, located at 100 Young and Duke Streets. Any person who claims that they can help secure a visa for you is committing fraud.

The “visa consultant” also mentioned that for a fee he could provide me “inside information” on how to obtain a U.S. visa. Is the “inside information” worth the money?

No. All the information any visa applicant needs is publicly available on the internet from the Department of State’s official website at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html and from the U.S. Embassy Georgetown’s official website at: <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/visas.html>. If a “visa consultant” claims to have special knowledge about how to obtain a visa, you should ignore that advice and decline any offer for other “services.” If you are applying for a non-immigrant visa to temporarily visit the United States, during your interview, the consular officer will ask you a series of questions about your purpose of travel to the U.S., your living circumstances in Guyana

and other relevant details specific to your application. Based upon your answers to these questions, the consular officer will decide whether or not you qualify under U.S. immigration law for the type of visa you are seeking. There are no special “tricks” or “right answers” that any person can supply you with. If an eligible family member in the U.S. has submitted an immigrant visa petition on your behalf for you to permanently migrate to the United States, at your interview the consular officer will ask you questions about your relationship with that family member. If your relationship is legitimate, then clearly you would not need assistance from a “visa consultant” to convince the consular officer. Conversely, if you are attempting to defraud the U.S. immigration system by claiming a family relationship through blood or marriage which does not exist, the services of a “visa consultant” may appear tempting. Be forewarned that the U.S. Embassy employs a sophisticated array of new anti-fraud tools to uncover such relationship fraud and your attempt is likely to be discovered, leading to severe consequences for you under U.S. immigration law and making you permanently ineligible to ever get a visa.

Isn't there a way for me to just pay more money in order to have a better chance at obtaining a U.S. visa? That is what the “visa consultant” said.

The only way to obtain a U.S. visa legally is by personally making a formal application for a non-immigrant visa or by having a petition for an immigrant visa petition filed on your behalf and then undergoing the interview and complete application process at the U.S. Embassy. Any other route proposed to you by a “visa consultant” is fraudulent. To apply for a non-immigrant visa, you must pay only a non-refundable application fee of \$131 U.S. dollars (the fee is paid at Demerara Bank at one of several locations). Immigrant visa applications require a \$355 U.S. dollar fee that is generally paid in the U.S. by the relative filing the petition on your behalf. For a full presentation of visa fees, please visit the Department of State's official website at:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1263.html. Besides the charges described on this website, there are no other fees required and no reputable individual will ask you for additional fees at any time. If an individual does ask for additional payment you should immediately report the incident to local law enforcement officials and to the U.S. Embassy. Next day appointments for a non-immigrant visa are often available. However, if you are experiencing an emergency and need to travel as soon as possible, then you may request an expedited non-immigrant visa interview. There are no additional fees associated with this special accommodation. Contact the U.S. Embassy Georgetown's Visa Inquiries Unit at 225-7965 or 225-7966 Mondays thru Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. or by email at visageorge@state.gov to inquire about early appointments. It is recommended that you apply for your non-immigrant visa far in advance of your proposed travel because during the peak travel months, it can sometimes take several weeks to get an appointment.

What should I do if I have already contracted the services of a “visa consultant”?

If you have fallen victim to a “visa consultant” scam in the past, officers at the U.S. Embassy are interested in helping you bring to justice those individuals responsible for defrauding you. You may contact our Visa Inquiries Unit by telephone at 225-7965 or 225-7966 Mondays thru Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. or by email at visageorge@state.gov. If through no fault of your own you were taken advantage of by these confidence artists but still have a legitimate need to travel to the U.S., then you should apply for the

appropriate type of non-immigrant visa. Depending upon your circumstances, your previous involvement in attempted visa fraud may or may not jeopardize your suitability for receiving a U.S. visa. Above all, you should be honest and forthcoming with all officers at the U.S. Embassy. Truth is always the best policy.

“Ask the Consul” is a bi-weekly column from the U.S. Embassy answering questions about U.S. immigration law and visa issues. If you have a general question about visa policy please email it to us at AskGeorge@state.gov. We select questions every other week and publish the answers in Stabroek News and on our website at http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/guyana/ask_con.html. For more information about visas please see <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov> or <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/>.

Other than the questions we select, we DO NOT respond to questions sent to Ask the Consul. Please contact the visa inquiries unit (email visageorge@state.gov or call 225-7965 between 8 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday) if you have questions about a specific case.